

THE LADY IN BLUE

A
SITKA
ROMANCE



ISLANDS IN SITKA HARBOR

BY

Geo. W. Anderson

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BY
JNO. W. ARCTANDER, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF
"THE APOSTLE OF ALASKA"
"GUILTY?"
ETC.

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THE LADY IN BLUE

I.

I HAD just returned from Alaska, "The Great Country", as it was christened by Charles Sumner in the days when Secretary Seward forced it upon an unwilling American Congress at a cost of more than seven millions of money.

By the merest accident I had happened to spend my summer vacation in this "Wonderland of America", and I was brimful of my discoveries in our own "Land of the Midnight Sun". They were more strongly impressed on my mind, perhaps, because of my former total ignorance of that country.

In fact, I had become so captivated with the scenic beauty and grandeur of Alaska, that I could not speak of anything else. I could not

think of anything else. To tell the truth, I dreamed of nothing else.

When my old friend and college chum, Dick Wall, a few days after my return, invited me to a dinner "en famille" with him and his charming wife, it therefore goes without saying, that Alaska became the all-absorbing topic of conversation at the table.

With the brush of an enthusiast I painted to my interested listeners the charming inland waterways, winding for nearly a thousand miles through the mazes of the eleven hundred forest-clad and flower-strewn islands of the Alexander Archipelago; the innumerable, deep fiords, sounds and inlets, in whose green glittering waters the giant-like yellow cedars and the graceful Sitka spruce, growing up the mountain side, recognized their mirrored shadows; the smiling blue sky, toward whose embrace the snow-capped mountain-crag seemed longingly to stretch their dizzy heights; the hundreds of glaciers, living rivers and seas

of ice, from whose glittering towers and spires of clearest crystal the glorious sunshine reverberated in a thousand shifting colors and shades, from the deepest and darkest indigo to the most snowy and silvery white.

Nor did I forget to describe the sunsets with their remarkable mixture of colors, a wealth of yellow and red, burning with the heat of glowing fire, and then as a contrast, making the richness all the stronger,—only a little way off,—the cold gray-blue shadows, which seemed to give one premonitions of a snow-storm.

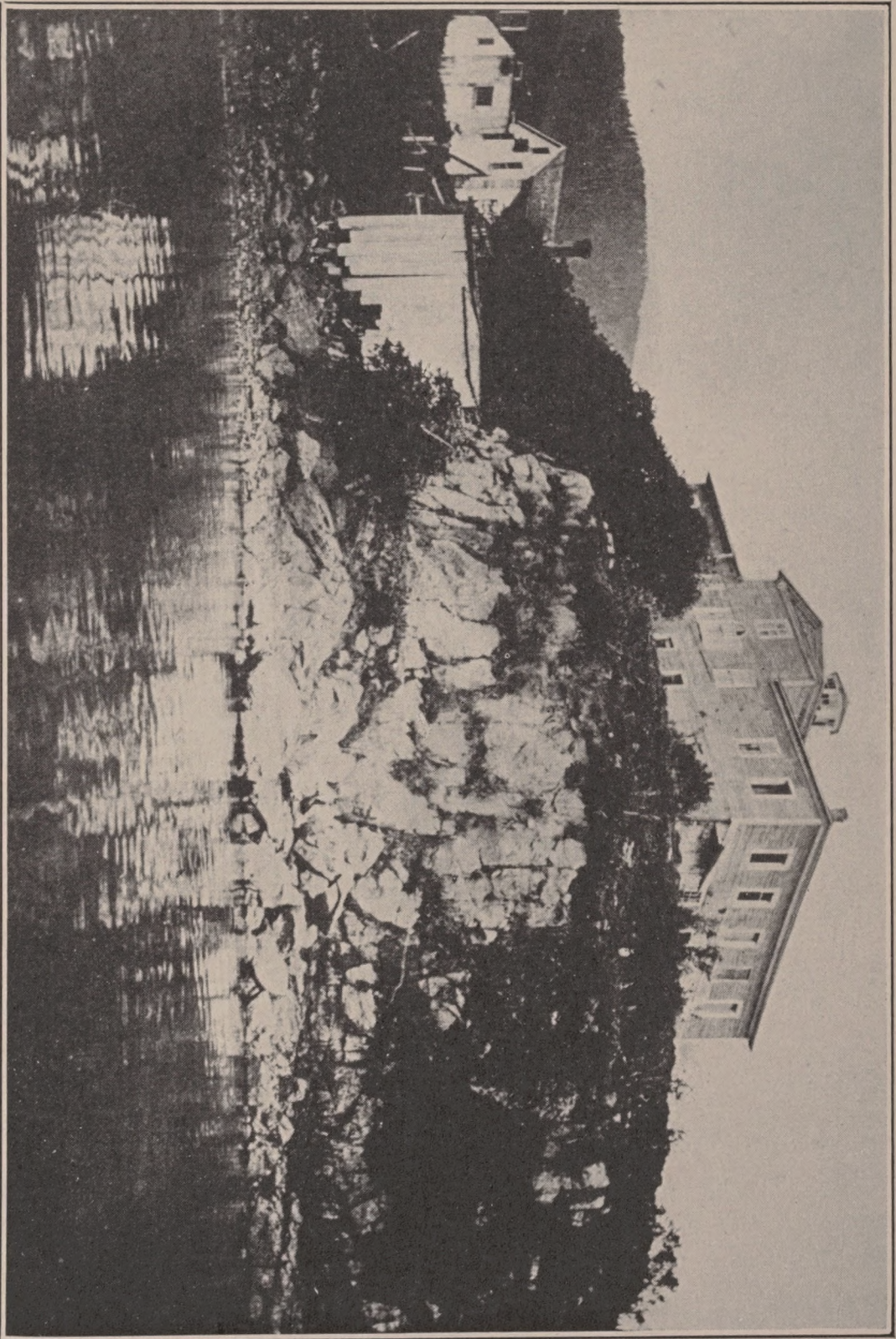
“Yes,” interrupted Mrs. Wall, “now I understand you. This gets nearer to my idea of Alaska. I have somewhere read of it as ‘The Great National Refrigerator’. We must be thankful, I suppose, that you did not freeze to death on your pleasure trip.”

“Allow me, my dear Mrs. Wall, to correct this very common, but therefore no less erroneous notion. Southeastern Alaska, where I have traveled this summer, has the most deli-

cious, the most equable climate of any country in the world. There is less than twenty degrees difference between its mean temperature in summer and in winter. While in the summer the fresh breezes from the sea interdict the sweltering heat we suffer from here, the climate in Southeastern Alaska in the winter can stand a favorable comparison with that of the District of Columbia, or of the State of Kentucky. This is due to the benign influence of the Japanese current, or 'Kuro Shiwo', which, coming from the equator, skirts the whole Southeastern Alaskan coast and sends its warm waters in between the islands of the archipelago. Do you know, that at Sitka, in the northern part of Southeastern Alaska, the thermometer has not crawled down to zero more than four times in the last 35 years?"

"Sitka!" exclaimed Dick. "Have you been there?"

"Certainly! That is where the Russian bishop was located, who is said to have told



Baranoff Castle at Sitka in 1890

our Mr. Seward, that he thanked God every day of his life for having sent him to 'such a nice, mild climate'."

"Is there in Sitka a building called Baranoff Castle?" persisted Dick, with what I thought a strange, mysterious look in his eyes.

"There is no Baranoff Castle in Sitka now, but there was in times gone by. It was most mysteriously destroyed by fire in 1894, shortly after our government had spent some \$10,000 in restoring it to its former splendor. During the Russian rule it was the palace of the Alaskan governors, and many a wild revel has the old castle witnessed in olden times, if half of what people tell is true."

"Then there may be some truth after all in the old yellow manuscript of your father's, Marjorie," said Dick, addressing his wife. "I have always felt inclined to think, that it was merely a youthful product of the imagination of the old clergyman. But perhaps there is some foundation of fact for the weird story after all."

"You speak in riddles to me," I said.

"I suppose so. I will explain myself. Marjorie's father was in his younger days, long before he met my little wife's mother, an army chaplain. In that capacity he accompanied three companies of the Ninth Infantry regiment, under the command of General Jefferson C. Davis, who in 1867 was sent by our government to Sitka in order to receive from the Russians the possession of Alaska. Mr. Cramer was the first American minister who ever conducted divine services in Sitka, and was very proud of that fact. When he died, a couple of years ago, Marjorie found among his papers an old manuscript, yellow with age, containing a description of his experiences at Sitka. The old gentleman must have been as good a writer in his younger days as he was a preacher when I first met him, for his description of the surrender by the Russians to General Rosseau, our commissioner, on the eighteenth day of October, 1867, is most vivid. You can almost hear

the boom of the cannon from our gunboats and from the land batteries of the citadel, as the Russian flag, after some hitch in the proceedings, came down, and the stars and stripes were hoisted in its place. You can almost see the tear-filled eyes of the young and beautiful Princess Maksoutoff, the second wife of the last Russian governor, who on that very night most gracefully presided at a banquet and ball given by the governor in honor of the American officers. But what has always interested me most in the old manuscript is the 'ghost story' connected with the old castle."

"A ghost story, and connected with Baranoff Castle?" I said. "You must loan me the manuscript, Dick. Anything connected with Baranoff Castle cannot fail to interest me deeply."

"I am afraid you could not decipher the old preacher's hieroglyphics. At least I cannot. Marjorie is the only one who can successfully translate them. Suppose we prevail upon her to read the story to us? It is getting about

late enough now to make us all in a mood for hearing a real ghost story."

"Nothing would please me more," I said, conscious that I probably had taken up too much of the time with my own narrative.

"Are you sure you can stand a real ghost story upon a full stomach?" asked the hostess from the library, where she was searching in the pigeon-holes of her *escritoire* for her dead father's manuscript.

"Quite sure," I said.

"Well, here goes for the chaplain's manuscript," said Mrs. Wall, as, on returning to the dining room, she unfolded a roll of paper which certainly looked old and yellow enough to create in my mind a great curiosity as to its contents.

After turning over some leaves Mrs. Wall said:

"I will begin just where the ghost story begins. My father first mentions that the banquet and the excessive hospitality of the

Russians, with their incessantly repeated exhortation: 'Petnatchit Copla' or fifteen drops, which were not fifteen drops at all, but half a tumbler full of most ardent spirits, had made him sleepy, and that he felt anxious to retire for the night, as soon as the hostess should give the signal for repairing into the large dancing salon, which occupied one-half of the second story of the castle. I will now let my father tell the story in his own words."



II.

IT was nearly midnight, and as I did not dance, I had no desire to take further part in the revel, which to my notion had already assumed an altogether too noisy tone.

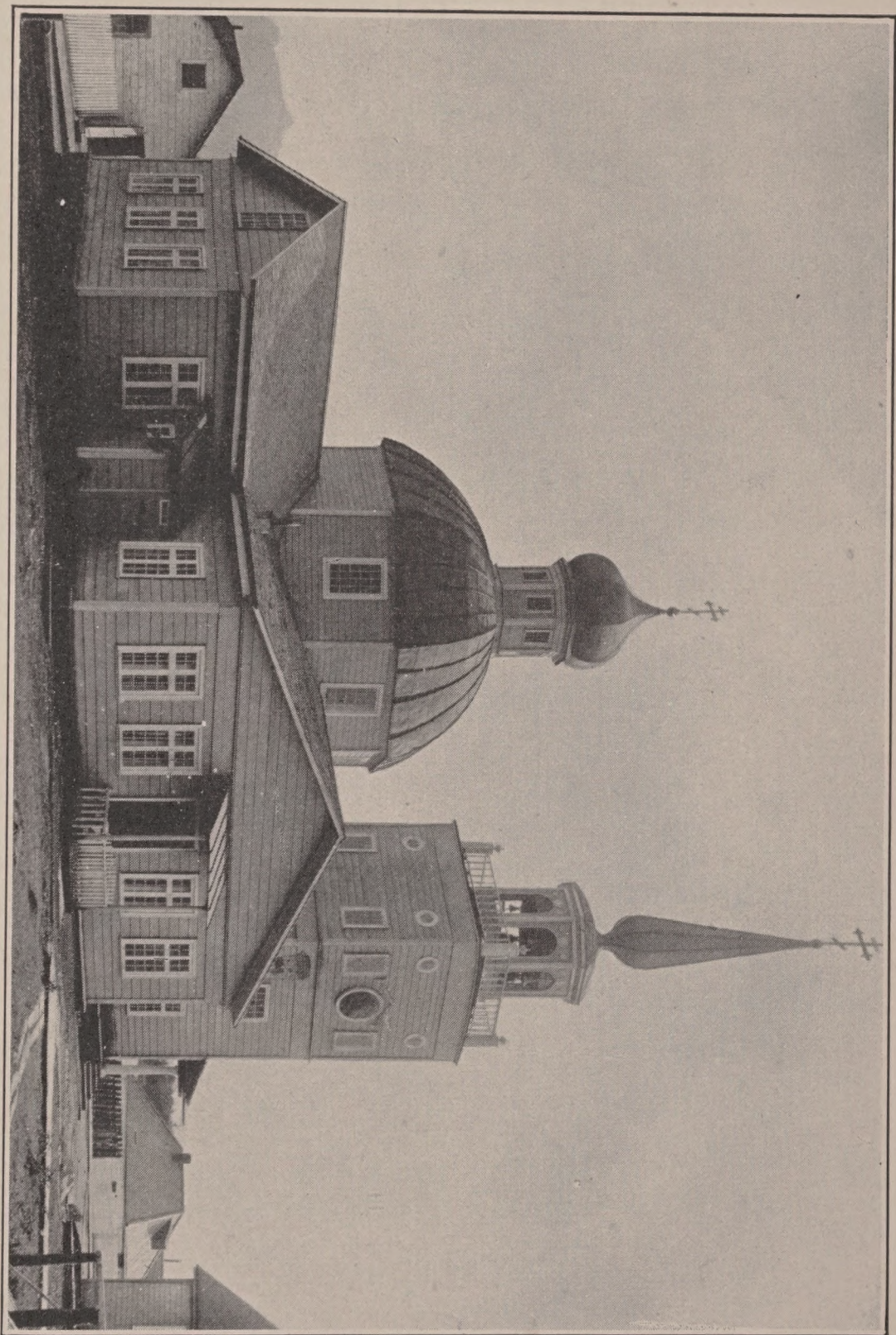
The exquisite tact of our hostess had placed at my side at the banquet table the reverend Russian priest, or "pope", in charge of the Cathedral of St. Michael at Sitka, an educated and interesting elderly gentleman, with whom, during the repast, I had had a most congenial conversation in French. I confided my desire to him, and he immediately communicated with a chamberlain of the governor's court, who called a servant and directed him to conduct me to my bedchamber. My friend the pope, with true Russian cordiality, insisted on accompanying me. We together entered the chamber assigned to me, preceded by the servant, who placed a massive silver candelabra, containing

three burning wax tapers, on the mantel piece, and thereupon with many and profound bows retired.

I remarked to the pope on the magnificent and evidently costly hangings and appointments of the apartment. The high ceiling was lavishly decorated. Little Cupids and Sungods were playing hide and seek between delicate clouds. The walls were hung with magnificent silken tapestries, evidently a century or more old, and the work of great masters in an art, which at the present time seems to be lost. The furniture was costly, finely carved and upholstered in satin and damask. Over between the windows, stood a large canopied bed, with silken hangings, now faded, but evidently once of a delicate blue shade.

The pope, noticing my admiring glances, as they fell on the appointments of the room, remarked:

“I see, little father, they have given you Princess Olga Feodorovna’s bedchamber. It



The Cathedral of St. Michael at Sitka

is one of the finest among the guest chambers in the castle, and I very much appreciate the tact of Princess Maksoutoff in giving the best chamber to a gentleman of the cloth."

"But I see you are sleepy and need rest," he continued, "so I will bid you good night. I wish you pleasant dreams, little father, and that you may not be disturbed by the ghosts. You have undoubtedly heard that the castle is haunted?"

"No, I have not," I said, "but I do not believe in ghosts, so that does not worry me.—What kind of ghosts do the superstitious people claim haunt the castle?" I added a little curiously.

"I shall not tell you tonight, little father, especially as this is the eighteenth day of the month, the very night, when it is claimed, the ghost comes. If I describe it, as people, who say they know, claim it to be, the power of imagination of the little father might get the best of him. As it is, if anything should

happen, the little father will know there is something in ghosts after all, and can tell me all about his experiences in the morning. I shall look for a visit from you as early as you please. I reside in the green-roofed dwelling on the Governor's Walk, not far from the Cathedral. Any child will show you the pope's house. The popadia will be most pleased to meet the American little father, and now, good night, little father, pleasant dreams and no spirit visitors, if you please!"

With this remark the priest bowed himself out of my room.

My first thought was to lock the door but on attempting to do so, I found that there was no key in the lock and no bolt on the door.

This apparent lack of privacy on the part of the Russians was certainly most aggravating, but considering that I was among a half barbaric people in what seemed to be a wild country, I made up my mind, that I could stand it, if they could. It only furnished the spooks

free play, if they should desire to make a call at the bedchamber of the old princess, that was all.

Having commended myself to the care of the great Father, I arose to disrobe, but somehow felt so drowsy, and the silk coverlets looked so inviting, that I could not resist the temptation to lie down on the bed,—just for a moment, before undressing.

I sank down in the most extravagant downy bed it had ever been my good fortune to enjoy and before I was aware of it, I had fallen asleep.

How long I slept, I do not know; but the first sensation of which I was aware, was of someone tapping me lightly on the shoulder. I raised myself quickly on the elbow, and there:—Was it a vision, or what was it?

By the side of my bed, not farther away than I could have touched her with my outstretched hand, stood a beautiful woman. She was dressed in a pale blue silk dress with a satin

sash of the same color, tied around a tapering narrow waist and falling in great lengths down over the unnaturally large hips, almost to the bottom of the wide expansive crinoline skirt.

The extremely décolleté corsage exhibited a lovely neck, and snowy finely chiseled shoulders, while the arms were covered with very full bishop sleeves, with narrow bands at the wrists.

On her black hair, so black that it seemed almost blue, and which hung down in corkscrew curls on both sides of a most beautiful face, was resting a silver band in the shape of a tiara or crown. Her black eyes were so large and piercing, that they seemed almost like two burning coals, but as she closed them for a moment, as with a painful movement, there came over the face an expression of despair, sorrow and suffering, so intense, as I have never seen depicted on human face, save in the wonderful painting of the Mater Dolorosa in the Royal Museum at Madrid.

In her left hand the lady in blue held a silver candlestick, in which was a burning wax candle. With the right she made several quick, imperious motions, as if pointing over her shoulder to the door of the room.

She then turned. And with her right hand around the flame of the candle, as if sheltering it from the draft, the magnificent Juno-like form slowly glided over the polished floor to the door, which opened as in obedience to her silent command, and half closed again behind her.

Although it seemed impossible for me to make the slightest move, while she was standing near my bed, now—that she had disappeared behind the door,—I felt an irresistible impulse take possession of me to follow her out in the hall, and, if possible, fathom the mystery.

I jumped out of bed, and ran to the door as quickly as I could, for fear that she would disappear, without my knowing whither.

Reaching the door I was surprised to find it

closed, but it readily responded to my eager grasp, and letting my eyes flash first in one direction and then in another, I felt my heart beat faster upon discovering the lady in blue gliding silently along the corridor in the direction of the great salon, from which were wafted toward the place where I stood, the measures of a stately minuet. She was still shading the flame of the candle with her hand.

Then suddenly I lost sight of her and of the candle, which had been glittering like a distant star in the dark hallway.

I hastened my steps and was soon rewarded. Only a short distance, and an open door showed a staircase leading upward. From six or seven steps up her candle threw just enough light to show the stairs.

I ran up the steps, determined that she should not escape me.

As I reached the landing, I observed her by the window on the opposite side of a large glass cupola, peering out into the dark night,

shading her eyes with her beautiful and transparent hand.

Oh, the sadness and sorrow in that face!

I was about to speak, to comfort her, to remind her of the great Master, who always had a kind word or a tender look for a sorrow as deep and as seemingly inconsolable as hers, to ask her to turn to the cross for her comfort and her consolation, when I heard coming from down below, from out of the darkness of the night, in the deep basso tones of the Russian sentry stationed on the bastion in front of the castle, these words: "One o'clock and all is well."

As if these words of human voice had awakened the lady in blue from out of a trance, I observed a sudden tremor in the hand shading her eyes.

An awful, unearthly cry of anguish resounded in my ears.

The candlestick fell to the floor with a crash and all was——darkness.

Determined to do what I could, to assist the sad-eyed, sorrowing lady, I crept cautiously across the tiles over to the place, where I had seen her stand but a moment before, and groped around in the dark. My hands touched the panes of the window, against which she had leaned, but she had vanished with the flickering flame.

I spoke, trying to make my voice as tender as possible, offering her comfort and help in her trouble, but there was no response—only my voice seemed rusty and unnatural. From the panes of the cupola my words of comfort came back, as if they had struck a stone wall, harsh and unfeeling. They sounded in my own ears like a hollow mockery.

I have always had the impression, that even in the dark, I could perceive the presence of a human being. I now experienced the opposite, a feeling of utter solitude, of lonesomeness,—of being left utterly alone.

I was satisfied that the apparition, whether

human or spirit, had gone out of my conscious existence.

My next thought was how to get back to my room. Cautiously feeling my way in the utter darkness, I finally succeeded in locating the landing and after descending what seemed to me a great many steps, I found myself in the corridor leading to my chamber.

They were now dancing a gay polka in the dancing hall, and its strains seemed to chase me in the opposite direction toward the door of my bed chamber, which I fortunately found standing open, the candles in the candelabra on the mantel still burning dimly.



III.

AFTER closing my door and on walking toward the bed, I caught myself looking over my shoulder.

I was not so sure, as I was an hour ago, that there were no ghosts.

The lady in blue seemed too real, too flesh-and-blood-like, too human, to be a spirit, but still no human being could have disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, as she did, just as if she had sunk through the floor.

No, I was not so sure of anything any more.

I remembered what an old man once said, when we were speaking of a haunted house, and when I pooh-poohed the idea of spooks: "Well, young man," he said, "before you are twice as old as you are now you will find out that there are many things between heaven and earth which you do not understand."

I disrobed and attempted to go to sleep, but

in vain,—I closed my eyes,—tried to shut out all memories of the lady in blue, but she haunted my every thought, and would not let me alone. Every few moments it seemed as if the door opened again and she approached the canopied bed.

I opened my eyes, almost glad at the thought of seeing her again, determined upon finding out her secret,—upon not letting her go until I had ascertained for sure, whether this beautiful creation was of flesh fleshly or a messenger from the spirit world—only to find that my imagination had again played me a trick.

Sleep did not come to my troubled brow during any portion of the long vigils of that night.

At daybreak I attired myself and found an exit from the castle. The sentry on the stairway leading down from the rocky eminence on which the castle is built, nearly a hundred feet above the level of the streets, eyed me suspiciously, as I walked out into the gray of the dawn, but he evidently made up his mind, that

he was simply up against the eccentricity of the "Boston men", as the Russians and natives at Sitka call us Americans, for he did not challenge me, but let me pass.

Realizing that it was too early to call on the pope, I sauntered along the Governor's Walk skirting the beach over toward the point and thence followed the footpath along the beautiful Indian river.

There is perhaps no more beautiful spot in America, than Sitka. It seems as if the spirits of the sea, of the mountains and of the forest have conspired together to conquer man's heart and tie it to this lovely spot with all the power of longing which the human soul possesses.

But this exquisite beauty of nature had no attraction for me that morning. My heart was too much racked with doubt.

What was the true solution of the riddle of last night?

I felt that the pope could solve it. And as soon as I could do so without rudeness, I

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knocked at the door of the long, green-roofed house on the "Governor's Walk".

A pleasant looking lady, fat and forty, opened the door and upon my inquiry for the pope, ushered me into his study, where I only had to wait a few minutes.



IV.

AH, little father, I am glad to see you under my lowly roof-tree. What can we offer you this morning? 'Petnatchit Copla'? No? No fifteen drops? But a glass of tea of my popadia's own brew? Ah, you do not know what you deny yourself! No one in all Sitka can brew a glass of tea like my little wife. You must not refuse. Sit down in this easy chair. I will bring in the Samovar, and the popadia will fetch the sugar and the lemons. Oh, do you think my popadia would have forgiven me, if I had allowed the American little father to go away without a glass of her superb tea? What did I say, one glass? Nine or ten glasses, I mean!"

Thus he continued to chatter. It was no use to try to make any objection, so I made up my mind to let him have his own way.

As soon as the popadia had left the room,

and while we were still sipping our first glass of tea with sugar and lemon, the pope remarked:

“Ah, I perceive the little father has seen the ghost of the castle!”

“And why, pray?” I asked.

“Oh, I read it in the little father’s face. It is pale, as if the color of the ghost was reflected in it. There is disquietude in the little father’s eyes. The little father is not so sure any longer, that there are no ghosts.”

“You are right.”

“What kind of a ghost did the little father see?”

“I saw a beautiful woman.”

“Aha, the lady in blue!”

“How do you know?—I did not say she was dressed in blue.”

“The little father need not tell me.—Pale blue is the color in which the brides of Russia dress. How was her appearance? In the style and fashion of today?”

"No, that is what is bothering me. I would have taken my oath on the Bible, that the beautiful woman who stood before me, was a living, breathing creature, a master-piece in flesh and blood, was it not for the fact, that her style of dress, and even the manner of dressing the hair with cork screw curls down the side of the face"——

"Had she red roses in her hair?" interrupted the pope.

"Yes, I believe she had red roses fastened in the curls at each side of her head. It seems so to me now, when you speak of it, although I did not consciously notice it before. And then she had a silver band resting on her head."

"The silver crown of the Russian bride. Yes—yes—that is likely so."

"But what I intended to say was, that the style of her dress and the way of dressing her hair reminded me of a painting of my mother, when she was a young girl."

“How long ago was that picture of the little father’s mother painted?”

“Let me see. I am now twenty-four years old, and as I am her oldest boy, it must be at least twenty-seven years ago.”

“That corresponds. — Twenty-seven years ago.——1840.——Yes, quite likely the young lady was dressed as the little father’s mother was twenty-seven years ago. Quite likely! Quite likely!——Father Veniaminoff left here in 1844. —— Christmas day, 1844. —— That was the day he went away from us to take up the duties and responsibilities of Metropolitan at Moscow. Did the little father ever know Father Veniaminoff? No.—No, of course not! Well, the little father should have known him. God bless his sacred memory a thousand times! He was the greatest bishop in the orthodox church, and that is as much as the greatest in all churches. Ah, if the little father could have seen him!—Six and a half feet tall, broad shouldered and muscular. A head taller than

all the people. Even the governor looked like a boy beside him. A regular athlete he was also,—handsome as a Sungod—and so clever. When he preached all the people listened without moving or stirring until he stopped. Oh, he was a great man. He was the first bishop at Sitka. It was he who ordained me deacon of our holy Mother Church thirty years ago.”

“Yes, but father, what has this remarkably tall priest or bishop to do with the ghost—if it was a ghost?”

“He has everything to do with it. It was his influence which conquered, when the brute force of the great governor failed. It was he who married the lady in blue to the prince. God forgive him for that.”

“But, father, I have as yet told you nothing of what I witnessed in the castle last night.”

“You need not do so, my little father. I know it all. She had a candle?”

“Yes.”

"She protected it with her hand from the draft?"

"Yes."

"She ascended the steps to the cupola?"

"Yes."

"She shaded her eyes and peered out into the night towards the South, where the one hundred and thirty forest-clad little isles of Sitka lie sleeping?"

"Yes, she did."

"She dropped the candle, did she not, and shrieked and was gone?"

"Just so!—But how can you know, father?"

"You are not the only one who has seen the 'Lady in Blue of Baranoff Castle', little father. That is the explanation. You did see a real ghost last night, as sure as there is a God in Israel."

"How can you prove it to me?"

"Let me tell you the sad life story of the Princess Olga Feodorovna."

I shuddered.

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Was that not the princess, whose bedchamber the pope told me last night I was to occupy?

I commenced to see the beginning of the end now.



V.

THE pope proceeded:

“It was in 1840 the ‘White Czar’ sent the lieutenant commander in the Russian navy, Count Adolphus Paulovitch Etholin, as Governor of all Alaska to Sitka. The Count had been here before as a midshipman and as a young lieutenant, but that was long ago.

Now his hair had grayed, and his face had wrinkled in the service of the Czar, but he was still handsome enough to win the heart and hand of the excellent Finnish countess, who had the reputation of being the most beautiful as well as the best-hearted among the maids of honor at the St. Petersburg court. When he came to Sitka as the military governor of the Czar and as the director and manager of the great Russian American company as well, he brought with him his young and beautiful countess, fair as a summer day, and also

Princess Olga Feodorovna, an orphaned niece, wealthy and proud, and dark as the raven's glossy wing, or as a starless night.

Her acres were numberless—her slaves counted by the thousands—her palaces in the country and in the city magnificent as are few. In fact, she was counted one of the richest and most beautiful heiresses in the Czar's dominions. It was said that so many of the noblemen at the court of the Czar had killed each other for her sake that our 'White Father' gave as an excuse for appointing Count Etholin to the governorship of Alaska, that he had to take his choice between exiling Princess Olga and losing the flower of his army.

The young officers stationed at Sitka of course all fell in love with her, although those, who know, say, that she gave them neither cause nor encouragement. A look from her black eagle eyes; a word on the race track, a dance at a ball, would suffice to set the whole

mess against the favored recipient and cause duels by the score.

Nevertheless she distributed her favors impartially. As the sun she shone for all, and none could claim her for his own, until one day the blue eyes of Victor Gregorovitch Schupkin, a young nobleman of fine bearing and appearance and a midshipman in the Czar's navy, looked into her black eyes at a reception at the officers' club.

Feodorovna ere long acknowledged to her old faithful nurse, Nataschenska Petrovna, who had followed her beloved mistress across the sea, that she had seen the only man whom she could ever love, and it did not take the young midshipman long to read in the dark eyes of the princess, that his ardent love for her was reciprocated. If he did become the object of the hatred and chicanery of the other officers, who, with the rest of the world, soon perceived that he was the favorite of the most beautiful lady at the governor's court, what did

it matter, as long as he felt, that nothing could make him lose his place in Feodorovna's heart?

The countess, who lived only to make others happy, and who has left the most tender memories at Sitka, as our Lady Bountiful, whose heart was always bleeding for those who suffered and were in need, seemed to favor the suit of Victor Gregorovitch, and the governor himself did not let any one understand, that he had any objections to the young man, until some time after Prince Ivan Sergovitch Peploff had appeared at Sitka.

No one could make out what errand this old blazè rouè had in Alaska. By his gambling and riotous living he had managed to run through three considerable fortunes, that of his father and of his mother, as well as of his wife. By his wild and dissolute life, and, if rumor spoke the truth, even by blows and corporeal maltreatment, he had driven his wife to despair, insanity and finally to death.

A Russian proverb says: "A woman is not a pea—you cannot crush her."

Prince Peploff believed in the proverb, but found to his astonishment and undoubtedly to his great joy, that in his individual case the proverb did not prove true, and that a woman could be so cruelly treated as to be crushed out of existence. I said it made him glad. The fact was that the old rouè had seen Feodorovna at a court reception in St. Petersburg, and to see her was of course to fall in love with her. The old burned-out piece of charcoal, which he had had allotted him in place of a heart, was fanned into flame again. Perhaps his knowledge of her great wealth and extended possessions did not tend to cool the ardor of the aged admirer of the beautiful princess.

The prince, upon his arrival at Sitka, assiduously let it be known that he and the governor had been great friends in the days of their youth, and that this friendship had driven him to Alaska after his wife's death, partly to

drown his sorrow, and partly to try to forget, in going over with his old friend, the governor, the escapades of their youth, the fact that old age was creeping upon him.

His attentions to Feodorovna soon became very assiduous, and it is hardly necessary to say, that they were most distasteful to her.

In paying his court the aged suitor seemed to have at least the passive support of his old friend the governor, and when it became rumored, that the governor had told Feodorovna that he desired her to receive the attentions of the prince with more eagerness, if she desired to stand well with her uncle and guardian, people commenced to ask themselves, what the secret could be of the influence which the old blackguard seemed to exert over Governor Etholin.

Perhaps due as much to hints, which the prince himself found it convenient to throw out, as to anything else, it soon was whispered around that the old rouè had the governor in

his power, and could crush him any time he so desired, if he should undertake to thwart his aim. When folk asked, how this could be, in some mysterious way it leaked out, that both the governor and the prince had in their youth been members of the "Society of the North", a secret revolutionary society of the early twenties counting among its members a number of young officers and students belonging to the nobility.

It was quite generally surmised, when the governor of St. Petersburg, the redoubtable Miloradovitch, the hero of fifty-two battles, was shot and assassinated as he was addressing a mob engaged in rioting, during the first days of the reign of our blessed departed 'White Father' Nicholas, that he had fallen a victim of the bullet of a member of this revolutionary society, who had been selected thus to strike death and consternation among the immediate followers of the Czar.

This rumor was now revived at Sitka, and

it was persistently insisted at the Officers' Club, that the governor had been the designated tool of the "Society of the North", in the assassination of the general; that his friend the prince was aware of the fact, and had threatened to reveal this secret to the Third Section, so justly feared by all political offenders in our country.

Be this as it may, the governor, whether willingly or not, soon became more exacting toward his niece, and demanded of her that she accept the prince's hand in marriage. When she absolutely refused to obey him, and declared that she would die first, inasmuch as she loved another, his conduct toward the young midshipman, whom he suspected to be her accepted lover, became unbearable. He refused him admission to the castle and took every occasion to insult him so as to drive him to a desperate action, which would have placed him absolutely in the governor's power.

The young people, who had secretly pledged each other their troth, according to the Rus-

sian custom, by the princess giving her lover a lock of her beautiful hair, and by his presenting her with a consecrated silver engagement ring, some bread and salt, and an almond cake, now could only meet each other by stealth.

The Lovers' Lane was their favorite trysting place. Have you seen the Lovers' Lane close to the Indian River, little father?—No?—Well, don't fail to visit it, before you leave Sitka. It is one of the most beautiful spots on earth.

When the governor discovered that the lovers kept up their secret meetings in spite of his ukase, he bethought himself of another remedy.

One bright September morning the sloop "Oouropa", Captain Tebenkoff commanding, received secret sailing orders to start that very night for a cruise along the west coast of Alaska, for the purpose of forcing the natives north of the Yukon into submission to the Czar.

Toward nightfall young Gregorovitch was



Lover's Lane, near Sitka, Alaska

sent aboard the sloop with an important message, and suspecting no foul play, he promptly reported to Captain Tebenkoff, who ordered him below, and forced him to accompany the sloop on its cruise without giving him an opportunity to communicate with any of his friends ashore.

When the young midshipman had thus been gotten out of the way, the governor undoubtedly thought he would have clear sailing, and that Feodorovna would now submit to his wishes.

But he had calculated without taking into account her force of character.

Nothing could move her, and she resolutely told her uncle, that she would cheerfully face death rather than become the wife of the hated prince.

But some four months after Gregorovitch's disappearance the governor enlisted Father Veniaminoff's services, by confiding to the great bishop, that thus only could a grave and

imminent danger to himself and his family be averted.

The good father has told me himself, that never in his life did it cost him so much to do what he saw as his duty; that he quailed before the undertaking to persuade the beautiful girl to sacrifice her love and happiness in order to save the threatened honor of her uncle, whose venerable mother, now in heaven, had been more than a mother to her, who never had known a father or mother of her own.

It was through the persistent efforts of the bishop and especially through his appeal to her obligation to the dead foster-mother, that she finally relented. From her unwilling heart and lips the promise was wrung, that if nothing was heard from Gregorovitch in the meantime, she would marry the prince on the governor's birthday, the coming eighteenth of March.

The eighteenth of March, 1844, came, and no tidings of Gregorovitch, nor, for that matter, of the sloop on which he had sailed. The

latter fact had assiduously been kept a secret from Princess Olga. The parties interested had in vain attempted to persuade her, that her lover must have perished in some mysterious and unaccountable way. Her heart told her, that he still lived.

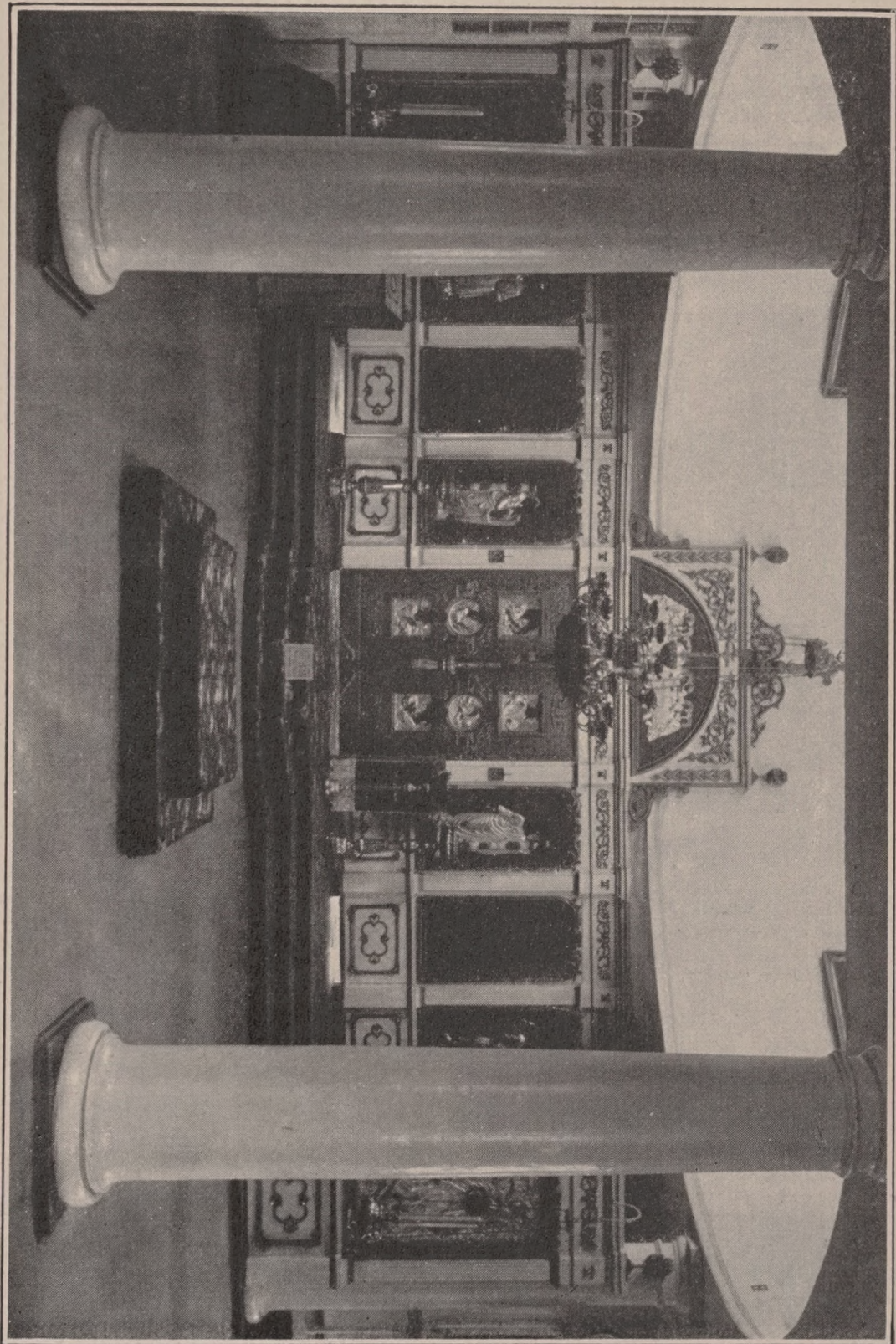
It had been rumored among the servants of the castle and by them spread abroad, that every night, after midnight, Feodorovna, accompanied by her faithful Nataschenska, would ascend to the cupola on the roof of the castle, and from this elevated point of vantage peer out into the night for news of her sailor lover.

This persistent watching for the lover, who came not, never ceased.

The wedding day had come.

There were no tears glistening in the beautiful eyes now.

Dressed in the pale blue of the Russian bride, with the silver crown on the raven locks, she stood, pale as a corpse, but with a determined look in her black eyes, to do her duty as she



The Interior of St. Michael's Cathedral at Sitka

saw it, before the bronze doors in St. Michael's Cathedral, which enclose the holy of holies, where, under the laws of our church, no woman can ever be permitted to enter.

When during the wedding ceremony the earthen vessel was broken, the symbol of the submission of the wife to her husband, even to the extent of dying for him, there was a faint tremor in her eyelids, and a contemptuous smile curled for a moment her lips.

When the prince tapped her naked shoulder with a whip to remind her of the punishment, which may become one of the charms of married life, the bishop observed the sudden gleam of a terrible fire in the black eyes.

That was all.

Otherwise she was to everyone the submissive bride.

VI.

THE bridal banquet was in progress. It was near midnight. The bride had not touched a morsel of food or a drop of wine. She sat erect, but pale and motionless, beside the aged bridegroom.

Suddenly there boomed a cannon through the stillness of the night.

Everybody knew what it meant. A vessel was in the offing. In a moment the beacon light in the glass cupola on the roof of the castle would be lighted. Then the bonfires on Signal Island, designed to lead the ships into the harbor, would blaze forth, and inside of half an hour the vessel would drop anchor within the confines of the port.

There came a sudden flush of color to the cheeks of the bride.

“Was *he* coming? Now? When it was too

late?—Not too late!—Too late to live!—But not to die!”

But no! He was dead, dead,—dead! and soon,—soon,—when her uncle’s honor was saved,—could she enjoy the privilege of joining him in the sweet beyond.

An hour later! The governor was on his feet. He had proposed a toast to the happiness of the bridal couple. There was a wild huzza. Every one rose to their feet.

“Long live the prince and princess!”

Just then the door opened a trifle and Nata-schenska’s white wrinkled face showed in the opening.

The bride noticed it, made an excuse of sudden illness, and flew more than walked to the door leading to the corridor.

Outside the door:

“He is here?”

“Yes, child; he is waiting in the hall outside your chamber door.”

It was a matter of a few seconds only.

"Olga!"

"Victor!"

Their lips met in a long, passionate kiss.

"Hush!"

There was the noise of a step on the landing. Her right hand fumbled for the poniard suspended at his left side. She has unsheathed it! The next moment it has penetrated her heart, and a warm stream of blood strikes him in the face. As she falls dead in his loving arms a look of joy comes into his eyes. The poniard is in his hand! Now it is buried in his own heart!

As his life blood gushes forth, he sinks to the floor with his precious burden in his arms.

Separated in life! United in death!

The governor's hard heart relented. The next day they were buried in the same grave. But not in the cemetery. You will find a Greek cross a little way to the left of the Lovers' Lane, at the place where God's sunshine trickles through the dense leaves.

It marks the grave of the suicides who cannot find a resting place in consecrated earth.

Suicide is a grievous sin. Can it ever be forgiven? Popular belief among the Russians has it that a suicide must do penance for his awful sin by haunting for fifty years, in the darkness of the night, familiar places, repeating what was before death his wont to do.

Then comes forgiveness and rest for the weary bones. Not before.

The princess whom you saw last night, is doing penance.

Every eighteenth day of the month she is peering through the darkness for her lost lover.

Let us pray for her soul!"



VII.

THE last words of the chaplain's manuscript had been read, but no one spoke. It was as if the spell of the ghost of Baranoff Castle had come into the cozy dining room and was upon us all.

After a long silence I remarked:

"How strange! It was on the eighteenth day of March, 1894, just fifty years to a day from the wedding—from the death of the beautiful Russian princess,—that Baranoff Castle burned to the ground. No one at Sitka can explain how the fire started, but all, who had an opportunity to know, agree that it was first observed in the glass cupola on the roof."

"Strange indeed!"

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